

POSTCOOL:

THE QUESTION OF COLLECTIVE ORGANIZATION IN POSTCOLONIAL CAPITALISM AS CHALLENGED BY A SMALL MILITANT GROUP IN THE RAVAL, BARCELONA

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INTRODUCTION | RAVAL | LABORATORY | DISTRIBUTION | MEZZADRA RESPONSE | CITATIONS

What does it mean to translate the categories of postcolonial thought in the practices of organization of a subaltern neighborhood trapped in the hurricane of valorization and abstraction of urban space? Or better said, what does it mean to rethink radical forms of collective organization in the face of an attack of postcolonial capitalism on the urban life of a poor and derelict neighborhood? The Laboratory of 'Postcool' aimed to deal with the clash of these two questions in very practical terms. Here, the author, a member of the collective, recounts and problematizes the experience, situating it in the broader context of a reinvention of radical political practices in urban Europe.

In this article, I recount an experience that dealt with the question of organization in the context of postcolonial capitalism. An experience on the edge between knowledge and practice, theory and intervention, where the virtue we have been pursuing - understood as the Machiavellian ability of intervening in the display of reality to produce a fruitful political transformation (Negri 1999) - was to introduce our analytical endeavors into the dynamics of gentrification in our neighborhood, *the Raval*. It has been - and still is - an experience that intervened on a molecular level. That is, not on the level of transforming the political asset of reality as apparatus, but possibly affecting the micropolitics of the subjectivities that inhabit everyday life (Guattari 1984).

I focus on the ways in which a small group of militants affected one another and their environment. Indeed, almost all of the participants in The Laboratory were (and are) actively involved in grassroots political organizations in the Raval. The workshop allowed us to transform our own understanding of the situation we live in and to think about the ways in which we can intervene in it. This is what I will refer to as militancy.

The experience I address in this paper is a laboratory of audiovisual militant research in which I participated and that was informally termed *postcool*. Militant research is not only a committed analysis of the political relationships of exploitation of labor or in the urban space, but a problem-posing engagement with how capitalist relations affect the way in which we produce knowledge and the way in which our own production of knowledge can affect the political practices we enact against capitalist exploitation. Militant research is therefore a committed and collective production of common notions (common analytical tools and practices) for and by a political community, that allows for the production of knowledge useful for struggles (Malo 2004; cf. Borio et Al 2002, Conti et al 2004, Colectivo Situaciones 2003).

Postcool began in the summer of 2010 with the intention of tackling the question of political organization in the urban transformations affecting the everyday life in and around the Raval, Barcelona. We used three specific tools. These three tools encompassed the analytical categories found in the postcolonial debate, the technical practices of radical documentary filming, and our experience of the barrio as actively involved members of political organizations, militants. Our

POSTCOOL:

THE QUESTION OF COLLECTIVE ORGANIZATION IN POSTCOLONIAL CAPITALISM AS CHALLENGED BY A SMALL MILITANT GROUP IN THE RAVAL, BARCELONA

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INTRODUCTION | RAVAL | LABORATORY | DISTRIBUTION | MEZZADRA RESPONSE | CITATIONS

nomem est Omen as the adage has it: the Raval is the old Arab name for a neighborhood in the centre of Barcelona that means 'limit' or 'margin'. After being home to convents for centuries, it became the crucial territory of the first industrial revolution in Catalonia: factories, working class settlements, the harbor, and all kinds of formal and informal activities have shaped the streets of the Raval since the early 19th Century. Its new name, *Xino* emerged when the factories moved to the periphery of Barcelona (to the Poble Nou). The space of the Raval became a central point for brothels (that paid rent to the Church), poets, bohemians and poor people (who paid their bills working in the brothels), as well as sailors (who spent their salaries at the cabaret shows) (Genet 1964, Vallmitjana 2003).

The radical history of the Xino/Raval has been studied extensively (Villar 1996, Substrats & Rios, 2005). It was a crucial site for resistance and organization against the Franco regime and constituted the core of counter-cultural and sexual freedom movements from the 1960s onwards. It is a place where migrants have congregated, from the rural urban exodus of the early 19th century to the current global movements of migration. Class struggle, popular and counter-culture - as cultures of opposition, sexuality and migration - are the intertwined ciphers of the non-conventional history of this neighborhood.

Considered an immoral space, the Xino was re-named Raval in the early 1980s in the discursive and material construction of an urban project of regeneration. The area was developed by the modern and civil socialist administration to 'democratize' the barrio after the dictatorship by avoiding its luxurious memory and going back to the preindustrial name. A rationalist and hygienizing strategy that followed the principles of *Hausmannization* (Benjamin, 1968) was an attempt to transform a derelict neighborhood into a "neighborhood for everybody". This could have been the slogan of the urban planner Oriole Buigas (the Council's Director of Urban Plans and Projects in Barcelona from 1980 to 1984) in his endeavors to reaffirm the bourgeois rationality of city planning in accordance with the Modernist Vocation of Barcelona and Catalonia (Resina, 2008). A model of urban development based on the 19th Century Catalan Utopia of the *First Metropolis* (Guallar, 2010) that aimed to regenerate the slums of the inner city and plan the rationalist urban area called the Eixample. A regeneration whose goal was no other than an "embellissement stratégique" [strategic beautification] (Benjamin, 1968:87),

The real aim of Hausmann's works was the securing of the city against civil war. [...] The breadth of the streets was to make the erection of barricades impossible, and new streets were to provide the shortest route between the barracks and the working-class areas.

The first project to open La Rambla del Raval is presented in the early 1850s, just after the February Revolution of Paris, when Cerda proposed his plan according to Hausmannian principles of urban planning (Magrinya 2009). "Why not transform Sarria [the rich neighborhood on the top of the hills] into a place where everybody can live? Why the Raval?", one of the participants in The Laboratory asked, recalling the debate of the 1980s on the (*strategic*) *beautification* of the Raval. And the battle is still ongoing: the building of museums, the opening of Ramblas (typical

POSTCOOL:

THE QUESTION OF COLLECTIVE ORGANIZATION IN POSTCOLONIAL CAPITALISM AS CHALLENGED BY A SMALL MILITANT GROUP IN THE RAVAL, BARCELONA

Francesco Salvini - School of Geography - Queen Mary, University of London

INTRODUCTION | RAVAL | LABORATORY | DISTRIBUTION | MEZZADRA RESPONSE | CITATIONS

population according to different citizenship status, as well as fragmenting the access to social services, and implementing new laws on the use of urban space following the lead of New York City's 'zero tolerance' policies (Larraurri 2007). In the construction of a policed urban space (especially through controls and raids to identify undocumented people), fear and safety operate as tools that instate borders over the smooth space of the city as subjective perceptions, imposing the segmentation of life-worlds in the urban space. Undocumented migrants, informal workers, the urban poor, precarious populations, 'traditional' working classes, international bohemians, artists, tourists, civil servants (from police to social services) and real estate developers share the same urban space. Yet, as in the game produced by the *CounterMapping Queen Mary Collective*, their mobility is differentiated and limited according to their status.

At the same time, the material construction of a hegemonic discourse of development imposes a subaltern condition on this *barrio*. Safety, sanity, hygiene, middle class regeneration and gentrification are the spine of the modern social-democratic discourse that permitted the making of hierarchies amongst the knowledges and cultures composing the contemporary urban space, materially constructing the space in these terms by clearing working class housing blocks or by building new avenues for the Olympic Games. There is a clear contrast here between the clever discourses of the 'serious' museum or the patronizing words of 'generous' social services and the drunken cackles of dark nights or the malicious whispers in the clumsy streets.

This double process in which social life is first segmented and then hierarchized, permits the development of specific regimes for each labor market (and each life-world) in the urban space. The informal economies of leisure and tourism (sex, alcohol, drugs and so forth), the correlation between real estate speculation and cultural development (urban development, corruption and global investments in the creative city), or the developmental economies of social services and urban regeneration (welfare state, externalisation of social services, urban regeneration) are correlated spheres of social production.

Due to the separations and interconnections among these spheres, the possibility of maximizing profit depends upon the ability to impose an efficient border between the different labor markets, in turn adjusting the mode of exploitations to the specific conditions of each segmented labor market. Indeed, the governance of urban life is a mode of production where exploitation is based on the heterogeneity of status, and situated relationships of power between capital and labor (Boutang 1998): in this sense the prevarication of labor - as the individualisation of the labor market (Fumagalli 2000) - is part of this process of proliferation of borders in urban production together with the management of global classes (Ong 2006) or the fragmentation of the status of migrants (Stassen 2003). This is the translation of a colonial *dispositif* with which to govern labor in the postcolonial metropolis, here concretely: the Raval.

This double implementation (segmentation and hierachization) of the colonial *dispositif* is functional to the governance of "the constitutive heterogeneity of contemporary global capital" (Million 2009:88, cf. Mezzadra 2006). In other words, the possibility of valorizing urban life is based on the complex articulation of different paradigms of capitalist accumulation: the

POSTCOOL:

THE QUESTION OF COLLECTIVE ORGANIZATION IN POSTCOLONIAL CAPITALISM AS CHALLENGED BY A SMALL MILITANT GROUP IN THE RAVAL, BARCELONA

Francesco Salvini - School of Geography - Queen Mary, University of London

INTRODUCTION | RAVAL | LABORATORY | DISTRIBUTION | MEZZADRA RESPONSE | CITATIONS

Communities and independent galleries are included in a neoliberal valorization of the city that aims to brand Barcelona as a space of alternative culture in the emerging global competition of urban regions.

In the Raval, the counter-cultural, migrant and transgendered milieus of the 1970s are involved in a generalized process of self-entrepreneurialization that aims to valorize this cultural production on a global market of culture and art (Expositor et Al 2003, Deutsche & Ryan 1984). A normalization that proposes a fruitful commodification of these life worlds while at the same time attacking their autonomy by subordinating it to the rule of exchange value.

Those who refuse this entrepreneurialization and commodification have to struggle in at least two ways in order to survive: against the unscrupulousness violence of global capital and the pernicky bureaucratization of the cultural sphere.

Bodega Bohemia (closed in 1999) and other cabarets of homosexual and transsexual culture struggled in the first way mentioned above. Here, the kind of political culture that managed to scrape through Franco's regime has been unable to resist to the violence of urban regeneration (and real estate speculation) (Dolz 2000; Gual 2010). In the former, satire and transgression represented a dangerous attack to the legitimacy of the regime. In the latter, culture and innovation feed development but are expelled once they are not anymore competitive for the market.

The second way in which struggles have occurred was a struggle encountered by those counter-cultural and political spaces that were trying to avoid becoming enterprises and in so doing, ran up against the administrative policies of the Council. 'Use Planning' along with the redefinition of commercial duties in the late 1990s as well as the 'Civic Ordinance on Urban Behaviours' in 2005 limited the possibility of maintaining open those spaces not driven by a commercial logic by regulating a strict commercial regime of labor organization.

For many cultural associations accepting such a regime, it meant renouncing their traditional systems of cooperative (self-) management. This was the case with Ateneu Xino, one of the cultural spaces where a radical critique of the contemporary regeneration of Barcelona was forged. After twelve years of political organizing against the violence of urban dispossession (defined as *urban mobbing*) this space was foreclosed by the police in 2007 (interview with Manel Gonzalez - one of the organizer of the Ateneu Xino; Horta 2010, Taller VIU 2006).

We can recall here Lefebvre's understanding of the abstraction of urban space (1991). Concretely in the space of the Raval, this has meant a double take. First, a postcolonial regime of government has segmented and produced hierarchies along the plane of urban life; second, cognitive capitalism's mechanisms of codification have disciplined behaviours in order to valorize social cooperation. This shows clearly how the postcolonial mechanism (for which labor is abstracted by translating life-world into the global language of capital, cf. Chakrabarty 2000) and the neoliberal commodification of the social cooperation (that incorporates the general intellect into

POSTCOOL:

THE QUESTION OF COLLECTIVE ORGANIZATION IN POSTCOLONIAL CAPITALISM AS CHALLENGED BY A SMALL MILITANT GROUP IN THE RAVAL, BARCELONA

Francesco Salvini - School of Geography - Queen Mary, University of London

INTRODUCTION | RAVAL | LABORATORY | DISTRIBUTION | MEZZADRA RESPONSE | CITATIONS

Chinese whispers or a laboratory of audiovisual militant inquiry in the Raval

This is the space where we have to organize! This is the enemy we have to face and the dynamics we have to contrast: the violent abstraction and expropriation of social life in urban space.

In this context, our attempt has been to engage with the complexity of the attack in an alliance of different actors in the neighborhood, constructing a common space in which to introduce categories, instruments and experiences that can help us struggle. After organizing a series of seminars on the right to the city in the social centre *Exit*, we realized that the format we were using represented a dead-end, because it closed down discussion by funnelling it into a rhetorical analysis of the dynamics of urban spaces.

This is why we wanted to build a new space, an original 'us' that involved people by sharing spaces of production, not just discussion. We wanted to talk about the crisis of representation and the silencing of our voices. The postcolonial categories were very useful in this attempt, but we needed to find tools to make this debate a dynamic production of alternative forms of expression. Tools with which we could both analyze and problematize. This was the only way - at least the only way we could see - that we could think the production of knowledge as a radical practice of organization.

When I refer to 'an original us', I think of the intertwining of different networks and communities that inhabit the neighborhood: older or newer migrants, students, researchers, street workers, transgender persons, and paupers. The group that comes together in The Laboratory proceeds from these different territories but never becomes a representation of the networks or communities (something that we probably secretly aimed at in the beginning).

There are reasons for this. Firstly, we proposed to different people that they should participate in a laboratory for the investigation of the postcolonial dimension of our everyday lives. The participants were primarily from the social centre *Exit*, the *Universidad Nomada*, an association of people in mortgage debt (*PAH*), an association for sex workers' rights (*Genera*), an association of street vendors (*Nomadas del Siglo XXI*), and members of the film-maker collective *Circes*. The collectives themselves did not consider this project their priority, which seems obvious when considered in the context of the immediate struggles these different collectives faced, whether this was the social centre up against the violence of the urban bureaucracy, the *PAH* fighting evictions and repossessions, or the *Genera* street workers and *Nomadas del Siglo XXI* who are having to deal with fines, detentions and expulsions on a daily basis.

POSTCOOL:

THE QUESTION OF COLLECTIVE ORGANIZATION IN POSTCOLONIAL CAPITALISM AS CHALLENGED BY A SMALL MILITANT GROUP IN THE RAVAL, BARCELONA

Francesco Salvini - School of Geography - Queen Mary, University of London

INTRODUCTION | RAVAL | LABORATORY | DISTRIBUTION | MEZZADRA RESPONSE | CITATIONS

This uncomfortable position, in which everybody expresses collective voices but no one is representative of any collective, shows us something typical of the way in which militancy engages with the complex assemblage of heterogeneous modernity. No one represents anyone because no one is an integer (in the sense proposed by Chatterjee (2002), namely representing any organization, community or network). However, the space of The Laboratory becomes a *living composition among singular expressions* that refer, evoke and connect collectives, networks, and communities. The shared space on terms that are different to this urgency is not the articulation of a unified discourse but the production of common space as *encounter*.

On the other hand, inhabiting this uncomfortable position allowed for a gesture of displacement. Ten persons and one thousand identities with different cultural, sexual, economic and racialized backgrounds, overlapping and contrasting. What we had in common was the experience of The Laboratory as a transformative force for our way of being militants. What we shared was a *collective becoming* of militancy. A concrete learning process of how to produce organization in the Raval. In this sense it is important to stress that was not so much about understanding the difference between concepts but about how to put these to work together with memories, practices and tools of expression.

For example, we focussed on the difference between *history2* and *history1* as proposed by Chakrabarty (2000), or *histories* versus *History* as we termed it. We also focussed on the opposition between discourse and whispers and the heterogeneity of modernity that stemmed from our mapping of the sounds that inhabit the modern metropolis.

Borrowing from a practice of radical pedagogy used by the *ultrared.org* collective, we recorded the sounds of everyday life in different parts of our neighborhood and discussed the composition of the different experiences of sound that we had. The map that emerged charted a myriad of languages from all parts of the world and the different tones and roles of each tongue: the tourist guide, the migrants on the benches of the Raval, the whispering and the kisses of sex workers trying to convince their clients to linger with them, or the silence of the streets when the police drove through, and the noise of the building sites that conceals the voices of undocumented workers. The rumors in the *ouvre*, understood as the complex social process that produces the city everyday (Lefebvre 1991) appeared to us as "a measure of the distance between a typical site of collective discourse and an ideal seat of official truth - between the bazaar and the bungalow, so to say" (Guha, 1983:259), or, in our case, between the streets and the museum.

Following on from this sound mapping, a group of us presented the concept of rumor and discourse in Guha (cf. Barthes 1986) and Chakrabarty's critique of history (*ex supra*). Another group of us who had a background in audiovisual arts took charge of presenting documentaries or film excerpts that dealt with the problems we had identified in the sound mapping - not only (or not primarily) to analyze the contents of political documentaries and find an analytical narrative, but to discover and learn their techniques, along with the political consequences of using different tools as a mode of expression.

POSTCOOL:

THE QUESTION OF COLLECTIVE ORGANIZATION IN POSTCOLONIAL CAPITALISM AS CHALLENGED BY A SMALL MILITANT GROUP IN THE RAVAL, BARCELONA

Francesco Salvini - School of Geography - Queen Mary, University of London

INTRODUCTION | RAVAL | LABORATORY | DISTRIBUTION | MEZZADRA RESPONSE | CITATIONS

viewer how to interpret the images she is watching, in contrast, an 'off-screen sound' accounts for something the viewer cannot see on the screen and that she can only imagine through the sounds she can hear. From there we built a discussion upon a similarity between this contrast in audiovisual language and the difference between the discourse of History and the whispers of histories.

Shot by shot, piece by piece, we constituted a *common speech* (Rossi-Landi, 1968) that emerged through our cooperative labor. In this common space, signifiers and signified worked according to a particular set of relationships, a hybrid *technology* where categories, techniques and experiences are mixed up and can work together. The labor we did, in other terms, produced an original *pragmatic* of language (Bakhtin 1993, Bazzanella 2005) where the links between signifier-signified were reconfigured in the relationship between postcolonial theory, audiovisual tools and experiences: linking rumor to off-screen sound, or the concept of *abstraction of space* to the specific policing of the Raval's street.

In order to move from debate to a process of production, we began to work on different questions. For this, we divided into two groups. One group worked on the category of labor, while the other (the group I participated in) started to work on housing rights and moved towards a broader engagement with the question of housing and the abstraction of space. How has the Raval changed? What happened to the inhabitants of the buildings that were wiped out? What is going to be built instead? We finished by focusing on a particular parcel of land that has been affected by the public works of a construction site for many years.

We began to look for stories that could tell us about the everyday dynamics of urban space before the process of gentrification destroyed it. On the one hand, we found the discourse of a 'coherent' modernity that aimed to hygienise and develop the neighborhood. On the other, looking for what social life inhabited this space, we could only find jokes, anecdotes, and little stories. Unreliable sources that talked with irony about the processes they experienced.

We moved into this gap of (un)reliability. The discourse of modernity is underwritten by recognized institutions as much as it is confirmed by architects, urban planners and criminologists. In the most of documentaries we watched through, the director would shot with a TV medium close up, in which the viewer can see the speaker's face and his/her hands, and is presented with some didactic descriptions of the academic qualifications of the interviewees. This is supposed to reassure the viewer of the truth value of the statements in the documentary. On the other end of the spectrum, rumors and whispers were almost never represented and, whenever they were, it was to make evident the imprecision of this kind of knowledge, the voices of the victims of ignorance (Guha, 1983). So we decided to start looking at these contrasts and use the whispers as sources of alternative truths against the homogeneous discourse of modernity.

In order to do this, we decided to search for the imaginary stories inhabiting a destroyed block of flats on Carrer d'En Robador, the most derelict of the streets on the side of the construction site. For us, the question of imagination and truth was compelling. Should we respect an

POSTCOOL:

THE QUESTION OF COLLECTIVE ORGANIZATION IN POSTCOLONIAL CAPITALISM AS CHALLENGED BY A SMALL MILITANT GROUP IN THE RAVAL, BARCELONA

Francesco Salvini - School of Geography - Queen Mary, University of London

INTRODUCTION | RAVAL | LABORATORY | DISTRIBUTION | MEZZADRA RESPONSE | CITATIONS

left simply to the cinematic truth of images. Then we let the night come and hold the voices from our interviews, reverting the role of the voice-off and collecting the rumors and the ghosts proliferating in the *barrio*. While our camera lingered on the public works of the construction site for the new Centre for Cinema of Catalonia - visual expression of the need for culture and beauty in the neighborhood - we used interviews to revert the function of voice-over. From the screen, the cultures that once inhabited this space started to occupy the sound space of the movie. They were searching for their own precarious voices to tell their different stories about modernity.

In the interviews and in the editing of the film, the critique of the homogeneous representation of modernity became entangled with the way we tried to contest and deconstruct the space, the way we chose to shoot or the stories we decided to stage. The political and technical discussions involved vivid translations of concepts into an optical point of view, as well as the attempts to use concepts, techniques and experiences as different parts of the same machine. Moving knowledge from one territory to another allowed each of us to engage with concepts or techniques from different positions and therefore challenged the power relations due to the knowledge differentials within the group.

Furthermore, this method gave us a concrete product to work with in the moment we moved out of The Laboratory. However, a problem emerged (or better is emerging) here: we realised that we had to turn the tension between product and process upside down. Now that the films are almost finished, we are engaged in discussing the process of distribution. How can we transform this distribution into a tool of political organization? If we are thinking *distribution* as a process through which to discuss the possibilities of *proliferating* political practices, concepts, experiences or languages, it would be reductive to fix our attention just on the two films we are making, not least because they are not necessarily excellent pieces of art.

Distribution and proliferation

If we want The Laboratory to be a space for the discussion of forms of organizing and not just 'urban problems', we need to present the product as a process, and to use *distribution* itself as part of this process of political organization. For example, we want to use the films (and the debates we had during the production) to question the position of new artists that inhabit the

POSTCOOL:

THE QUESTION OF COLLECTIVE ORGANIZATION IN POSTCOLONIAL CAPITALISM AS CHALLENGED BY A SMALL MILITANT GROUP IN THE RAVAL, BARCELONA

Francesco Salvini - School of Geography - Queen Mary, University of London

INTRODUCTION | RAVAL | LABORATORY | DISTRIBUTION | MEZZADRA RESPONSE | CITATIONS

In a workshop with activist groups, we could use different materials: we could listen to the recordings of some of the interviews and read excerpts of the transcripts in order to steer the discussion towards the limits and the possibilities of our own practices. A broader range of materials allows us to move beyond a linear representation of our products and use the *products* as stepping-stones as we move forward, thereby investigating the "decisive difference between merely transmitting the apparatus of production and transforming it." (Benjamin 1970).

Yet thinking about how to generalise access and how to use distribution as a step forward in the process of production made us move from the DVD to a GPL *drupal* platform where we could embed public virtual spaces such as pad.ma or diaspora* as a way of thinking the author as producer in the network society (Benjamin 1970, Castells 1996) and specifically within the techno-political assets we are immersed in today.

The only way to make this production politically useful is to master the competencies in the process of intellectual production which, according to the bourgeois notion, constitutes their hierarchy; and more exactly, the barriers which were erected to separate the skills of both productive forces must be simultaneously broken down. When he experiences his solidarity with the proletariat, the author as producer also experiences directly a solidarity with certain other producers in whom earlier he was not much interested. (Benjamin 1970:92)

In this sense, investigating the revolutionary tendency of a website would mean to trespass the borders between the different spheres of production involved in *distribution*.

Open discussions in the streets or on the web would allow us to connect the materials in a transversal way: interviews, films and photos, as well as the recording of discussions, of seminars, the fragments of books and films we used to imagine our own work. The discussions could be considered to make up a complex machinic space in which partial products become the first step of a new process. Also it would enable us to keep track of discussions and interlink the real and the virtual. This also includes blogging and recording seminars, using forums, piratepad.org and comments to trigger *real* discussions during workshops, and reporting - in real time - the discussions happening in the physical encounters on the Internet.

This constitutes not only a process of reflection on what we have done, it is also a process of organization, because it would allow us to share techniques, to build alliances, and to envisage possible campaigns and to experiment with new ways of doing politics. This process of proliferation could allow us to trigger an autonomous accumulation of knowledges: in the discussions, debates or web forum, the interventions would no longer be contingent on or subordinated to the voice of the author, but instead they would be part of a collective production of critique on how the violence of capital is affecting our lives (Foucault 1997). In so doing, the voices of the listeners would modify The Laboratory of *postcool* itself.

POSTCOOL:

THE QUESTION OF COLLECTIVE ORGANIZATION IN POSTCOLONIAL CAPITALISM AS CHALLENGED BY A SMALL MILITANT GROUP IN THE RAVAL, BARCELONA

Francesco Salvini - School of Geography - Queen Mary, University of London

INTRODUCTION | RAVAL | LABORATORY | DISTRIBUTION | MEZZADRA RESPONSE | CITATIONS

A second set of problems emerges when we reflect upon how to institute a *valorization* of this laboratory for the organization of struggles. For example, organizing a session with street-workers or a screening in the local association necessitates a massive amount of labor and social cooperation. It entails a collective attempt at translating and producing codes and modes of working to challenge the unequal positions participants occupy. The question is how to make concepts usable, not only intelligible, for people not used to theoretical discussion. It implies a form of political work that makes it possible to share in the complexity of debates, but also to distinguish (and possibly discriminate) those elements that are useful. With respect to the techniques of production, the challenge is not any easier. In order to build spaces of production from this project, it is not enough to simply avoid the privatization of the code - for example through the individualization of the author.

This valorization has to go in the direction of, I may be forgiven for the repetition, a committed and collective production of common notions that allows us to produce knowledges useful for struggles: to proceed through a method of "problem-posing" means "to create a problem that did not exist before" (Vercauteren 2007), rather than solve already existing problems.

This is meaningful to us because it represents a concrete way of tackling the question of *inventing new modes of organization*. For example, beyond The Laboratory, some of the participants started to use video streaming during the repossessions of mortgaged houses as part of a strategy to publicly denounce the violence of the crisis. This served to define a common project with people in a vulnerable situation, enabling them to discuss the use of images in their struggle and the networks of proliferation of such images.

The possibility of taking such decisions relied upon trust between the people involved in the struggle of PAH and the audiovisual artists that participated in The Laboratory. This kind of trust facilitated the positive dynamics of discussion, cooperation and production that took place in the *Postcool* laboratory and that helped all of us to collectively rethink our militancy, infusing our own political spaces not with solutions, but with new problems.

For me, the question is how to connect this process to other similar experiences such as the Instable Theatre Company of Madrid, in ferrocarrilclandestino.net, the militant inquiry ciudadessinfronteras.net, the podcast of ondaprecaria.com, the project communia.org and madrilonia.org, as well as many other techno-political projects that are engaging - especially after the Spanish Occupy movement - with network culture as a space in which to invent new ways of doing radical politics. It is about building a network of experiments that engage materially with an alternative way of organizing social production.

Finally, and to conclude, the process of militant research that we developed in this laboratory helped us - both practically and theoretically - to realize the importance of entangling categories, techniques and experiences as a way of constituting new modes of political organization within the contemporary functioning of global capital.

POSTCOOL:

THE QUESTION OF COLLECTIVE ORGANIZATION IN POSTCOLONIAL CAPITALISM AS CHALLENGED BY A SMALL MILITANT GROUP IN THE RAVAL, BARCELONA

Francesco Salvini - School of Geography - Queen Mary, University of London

INTRODUCTION | RAVAL | LABORATORY | DISTRIBUTION | MEZZADRA RESPONSE | CITATIONS

RESPONSE

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Francesco Salvini's article is a brilliant example of engaged writing. While it accounts for a collective experience of 'militant research' in the Raval, Barcelona, it also offers a subtle discussion of some of the most important topics at stake in intellectual debates surrounding contemporary capitalism as well as postcolonial and urban studies. Political and theoretical engagement enrich each other in Salvini's writing, making his article both a productive and an enjoyable reading. In what follows I will limit myself to some reflections on the 'method' of militant research (I) and on the use of Chakrabarty's concepts in Salvini's understanding of 'postcolonial capitalism' (II).

1.

"Militant research," writes Francesco, is "a committed and collective production of common notions (common analytical tools and practices) for and by a political community that allows for the production of knowledge useful for struggles" (p. 2). This is a good definition of militant research, combining insights coming from different theoretical traditions and practical experiences: from Italian autonomist Marxism to Latin American popular education. I also appreciate Salvini's statement that militant research must be understood as a crucial tool "for rethinking political organization." What I find potentially problematic is the emphasis on "a political community" as producer and user of militant research. I take this emphasis as a symptom of a widespread tendency in contemporary social movements across diverse geographic scales, often associated with a reference to "micro-politics." It is often the case (I am thinking here of some experiences I know in Italy as well as in Spain and in the UK) that militant research is used to reinforce the identity of a "political community" instead of opening it up toward new political possibilities and constellations, which should be in my opinion the main aim of militant research itself. In a totally different context, critically discussing the reduction of subjectivity to consciousness in French philosophy in the 1950s, Michel Foucault once spoke of "experiences" that have the task of "'tearing' the subject from itself in such a way that is no longer the subject as such, or that it is completely 'other' that itself so that it may arrive at its annihilation, its dissociation" (Foucault, 1991: 31). This seems to me a good definition of what the 'experience' of 'militant research' should be. I would emphasize in this sense even more than Francesco himself does that the "original us" he mentions (p. 7) should be understood as the main stake of militant research and not as its presupposition. This means that the form of organization prompted by militant research as a political method is open and centrifugal.

2.

POSTCOOL:

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Francesco Salvini - School of Geography - Queen Mary, University of London

INTRODUCTION | RAVAL | LABORATORY | DISTRIBUTION | MEZZADRA RESPONSE | CITATIONS

of the difference of "histories versus History" (p. 8). This is definitely a 'translation' that can appear as authorized by certain passages in Chakrabarty's chapter. The point is not the 'correct reading' of the text but rather its most productive use. As far as I am concerned, I think that speaking of an opposition of histories and History tends to end up proposing an opposition between 'concrete' and 'abstract' that is neither theoretically nor politically productive. Especially once associated with the use done by Salvini of Lefebvre's critical theory of the abstraction of urban space it risks ending up in some version of identity politics or communitarianism (which brings me back to the observations made under I). I am convinced that a different way of conceiving the relationship between History 1 and History 2, one that stresses the relevance of the encounters and clashes between the two, can be found in Chakrabarty himself, starting from his refusal to consider that relationship in dialectical terms (D. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton University Press, 2000, p. 66). Developing this different reading especially from the point of view of the production of subjectivity under contemporary capitalism would make an important contribution also to the method of militant research.

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POSTCOOL:

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Francesco Salvini - School of Geography - Queen Mary, University of London

INTRODUCTION | RAVAL | LABORATORY | DISTRIBUTION | MEZZADRA RESPONSE | CITATIONS

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POSTCOOL:

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Francesco Salvini - School of Geography - Queen Mary, University of London

INTRODUCTION | RAVAL | LABORATORY | DISTRIBUTION | MEZZADRA RESPONSE | CITATIONS

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POSTCOOL:

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[INTRODUCTION](#) | [RAVAL](#) | [LABORATORY](#) | [DISTRIBUTION](#) | [MEZZADRA RESPONSE](#) | [CITATIONS](#)

[top](#)